

## DNR MGBC Meeting Notes:

### Attendance:

Kent Van Horn (WDNR), Pete Engman (WDNR - NOD), Jim Holzward (WDNR- NED), Bill Hirt (WDNR- WCD), Ron Gatti (WDNR-SS), Tyler Strelow (WDNR - LE), Linda Olver (WDNR - CS), Paul Samerdyke (WDNR - SOD), Brenda Kelly (WDNR), Kurt Waterstradt (USFWS), Chip Lovell (USDA-APHIS), Steve Bertjens (NRCS), Don Kirby (WI Waterfowl Association), John Wetzel (WI Wildlife Federation), Jeff Nass (Hunters Rights Coalition), Todd Cook (WI Conservation Congress), Taylor Finger (WDNR)

### Not in Attendance:

Jason Fleener (WDNR), Brian Glenzinski (Ducks Unlimited), Peter David (GLIFWC), Joel Brice (Delta Waterfowl)

### **Update on Mute Swan Removal**

- Chip Lovell provided update on USDA – Wildlife Services Mute Swan Management in 2014.

### **Tribal Swan Hunt**

- The USFWS authorized the tribes in the ceded territory of MN, WI and MI to hunt swans beginning Nov. 1, 2014.
- A recent Wisconsin Outdoor News article contained incorrect quotes that suggested the WI DNR negotiated a swan hunt with the tribes.
- Tribal migratory bird hunting is approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service not the WI DNR
- Tribes are authorized to hunt swans from November 1 – December 31 in the ceded territory.
- Tribes are allowed to harvest tundra or trumpeter swans but when the harvest of trumpeter swans reaches 10 then the season will be closed.

### **Update on Waterfowl Season and Numbers**

- **Don Kirby** – In the interior of Wisconsin it seems to be feast or famine, however on Green Bay and the Winnebago chains hunting has been great, teal season turned out to be a non-issue and has only heard one negative comment toward the season impact.
- **Pete Engman** – Had a lot of water in the north, didn't really see the big push of ducks migrating through the area. Good hunting early but has since dropped off.
- **Brenda Kelly** – Didn't have a lot of teal early in the season but had good numbers of wood ducks and mallards. The opening was not great but feels it could be attributed to multiple openings and that

opening time is different from MN and IA. Divers have started to move in on pools 7, 8, 9 with 70-80,000 CANV and LESC.

- **Jim Holzwart** – Grand River wasn't too hot for the early teal season, there were teal around but they were concentrated into small areas and those areas were hunted hard. Still seems to be a down year for numbers especially wood ducks but could be attributed to all the water.
- **Bill Hirt** – Had a good year at the Mead, no teal hunt and the McMillian marsh was not hunted heavily. For the first time in a while Mallards were the #1 bird in the bag for the opening. There was a decrease in the number of hunters during the opening but an increase in the next 3 weeks. Daily duck bags were: 2-3 for Youth Hunt, 2-3 for Opener, 1-2 for Second Day. Good migration of dabblers came through around time of Southern Opener.

### **Update on Goose Harvest and Horicon Change**

- Kent provided an update on preliminary estimates of harvest for Early Goose (~22,000 2<sup>nd</sup> highest), Exterior is tracking similar to years past.
- Kent provided an update on how goose regulations have been simplified and liberalized.
- Kent provided an update on the change in the Horicon Zone and the fact that we have heard little to no issues from local LE and wildlife staff regarding confusion over the change in boundary.
- Harvest registration and estimates will now be consistent between Horicon and Exterior.

### **Update on Early Teal Season and Results**

- Kent provided background information on the teal season timing and process, he also provided a timeline and description of the public communication we put out regarding the early teal season.
  - o June 25<sup>th</sup> – Press Release
  - o July 1<sup>st</sup> – Online slideshow and Quiz (7/1-9/7, 4,300 people took the quiz and 38,000 people viewed our webpage)
  - o Aug – Article in the Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine
  - o Aug. 18<sup>th</sup> – Gov Delivery message went out to 20,000 subscribers
  - o Aug. 27<sup>th</sup> – Held an online interactive chat
- Description of the seasons accepted by WI, MI, and IA
  - o WI – 7 day season, 6 teal/day
    - Shooting hours for opening day were 9am – 7pm, Sept. 2-7 sunrise – 7pm
  - o MI – 7 day season, 6 teal/day, shooting hours sunrise to sunset
  - o IA – 16 day season, 6 teal/day, shooting hours sunrise to sunset
- Overview of the teal season and preliminary results

- A team of wildlife and LE staff was recruited and trained to observe hunters around the state.
- 44 hunting parties observed, 86% in compliance, 7% attempting to follow rules, and 7% blatant violators
- Results show that most hunters that were attempting to follow rules were successful. Some always break the rules and this is why we have LE
- Reminded people that this was a 3 year process so conclusions will come when the 3 year experiment is complete.
- USFWS criteria for approval are based on pooled data from MI, WI and IA

#### Comments –

- **John Wetzel** – Based on his experience hunting the season in MN in the 1960's, he can't believe that the season went this well. Would like to see an analysis done of the age of those that were violating and receiving citations because he thinks this season will discourage new hunters from going back out if it is too difficult for them to succeed. Thinks the department needs to do more education on how to tell birds apart during this season.
- **Don Kirby** – Wonders why there is such a difference in the results from this attempt compared to 50 years ago when the season failed. Kent reminded the group that WI did not participate in the teal season in the 1960's.
- **John Wetzel** – Personally hasn't talked with a single person that even participated in the early teal hunt.
- **Don Kirby** – Felt that the teal season was a non-issue and wasn't heavily utilized.
- **Brenda Kelly/Tyler Strelow** – Need to update the quiz and slideshow with more realistic pictures.
- **Kent Van Horn** – Asks group whether or not we should inform the public on teal hotspots
  - **Brenda** – Didn't think it was a good idea because in some years teal will be in places and other years they won't. Don't open yourself up for more criticism.
  - **General consensus** – Not a good idea to tell people where they are
- Shared public comments on the teal season which were mostly positive and thankful.

#### Update on Open Water Duck Hunting and Potential Language Change

- Kent provided history on open water hunting restrictions in WI and how the language has evolved over time.
- Kent provided a slide describing the current language and then some potential language and asked for feedback.

#### Comments –

- **Don Kirby** – Overall very pleased with the suggested new language and thinks that this will take care of at least 70% of the complaints voiced by hunters. Thinks it makes more sense and has a much more common sense feel to the wording. Overall good change and good for hunters.
- **Paul Samerdyke/Todd Cook** – What about floating cattails and floating bogs? Need to address the rooted aspect of the language.
- **Tyler Strelow** – Remove “rooted”
- **John Wetzel** – Still confused about whether or not hunters can use dead stumps, thinks the language used is still not clear enough.
- **Tyler Strelow** – Suggested that we provide some distance away from shore in order to get away from the concealment.
- Kent summarized suggestions to add “dead or alive” vegetation and remove “rooted”

**Update on 2015 Spring Conservation Congress Questions – Staff shared 2 questions that the WI Conservation Congress may place on the spring hearings.**

- **#520514 – “Placement and Removal of waterfowl decoys from water on private property**
- Kent provided a description of the question and some background. He also explained that almost no water in WI is considered private water and in only a few cases would this rule apply.
- Kent presented the results of the exact same question that was posed by the Congress at its spring hearings in 2011 with 53 counties approving and 18 counties rejecting. The resolution was then submitted to legislators where it was not taken any further.
- Todd Cook – Provided some background information from the Congress meeting.
- Jeff Nass – Provided comment and thinks that they question is a valid one and feels that the liberal definition of public water that Wisconsin has can hurt and frustrate landowners.
- It was questioned whether the Executive Committee may remove this since the question was already voted on 3 years ago.
- **#500314 – “Open duck season in all zones ½ hour before sunrise on opening day”**
- Kent provided information the results from waterfowl hunter survey and the public comment results from waterfowl season rule process.
  - o Based on waterfowl hunter survey sent out to 1000 waterfowl hunters, 43% of respondents voted for ½ hour before sunrise while 52% voted for some time later.
  - o Based on public input collected during the summer 48 people and 5 groups voted for ½ hour before sunrise, 46 people and 4 groups voted for 9am and 2 people voted for noon.
- He is confident that if this question is asked during the spring hearing it will pass by a large margin, but because mostly non waterfowl hunters are voting.
- Tyler Strelow – Biggest complaint from every hunter checked opening day on the river is that we open up later than other states.

- Brenda Kelly – Asked Kent if there was any way that Wisconsin could have discussion with MI and IA to have a consistent opening time?

### **Update on Canada Goose Management in Flyway**

- Kent presented map describing history on how we used to manage the different populations of Canada Geese and that WI has migrating geese that pass through the state from nesting areas in northern Ontario. Described the management of the increasing Local Temperate Breeding geese. Also informed committee of the percentages of what types of geese are shot in several states in the flyway and the flyway as a whole.
  - o Temperate Breeding Geese make up 70-80% of flyway harvest
  - o WI 40% temperate and 60% Ontario breeders (Regular season)
- Kent described the new management philosophy that the flyway seems to be heading in, toward less data collection and simplified management. Some people want to manage all Canada Geese as one and not have separate populations, reason for doing this is less cost to fly surveys and monitor Canada breeding geese. This may, however place too heavy a harvest on the Ontario breeding Canada geese with a negative impact to WI hunting opportunity.

### **Comments –**

- **John Wetzel/Brenda Kelly** – Does this mean that they wouldn't manage temperate geese and Canada nesting geese separately? Kent – For now only merge the populations nesting in Canada
- **Brenda Kelly** – How do you (Kent) feel about this?
- **Kent Van Horn** – Going to argue for continued monitoring of the MVP population so we can assess how any new management strategy affects the MVP population as well as quality of goose hunting in Wisconsin. Wisconsin is in a unique situation compared to other states.
- **John Wetzel** – Does this mean that they will stop banding in Canada?
- **Kent Van Horn** – Won't stop banding but will likely reduce surveys as they are costly, there is a declining hunting population in Canada and government feels that this is no longer needed.

### **Update on Waterfowl Regulation Schedule Changing According to USFWS Changes**

- Kent provided an update that starting in 2016 the USFWS will be using prior year's data on duck numbers and pond counts to set current year hunting season framework. 2015 will be unchanged but during the season setting process we will be working on how to analyze it for 2016 seasons.
  - o This will require new harvest strategies that may produce more restrictive regulations.
  - o Reason for new strategy is to save money by eliminating meetings and making the early and late processes all one.

### **Comments:**

- **John Wetzel** – Confusion and asked why the change and how come it is necessary? How is it going to work if we have a drought and the seasons won't be adjusted to reflect the conditions?
- Kent responded that this change is a result of a recent federal EIS on sport hunting.
- **Ron Gatti** – Canada has been doing this for a long time but likely will cause tighter restrictions on potentially numbers of days hunting and birds in the bag.
- **Brenda Kelly** – How is this going to affect species of concern for example Canvasbacks, Pintails and Scaup?
- **Chip Lovell** – Have they considered doing a 2 year consistent regulations and then reassessing? Kent – Yes but was ruled out in EIS
- **Don Kirby** – Feels this is a product of the decline of hunters and interest in our waterfowl community and this has ramifications.
- **John Wetzel** – What will happen if they have a 60 day season and it gets reduced to a 30 day season?
- **John Wetzel** – Glad he doesn't have Kent's job right now...